

# Not Very Qualified? Now

**National Vocational Qualifications are often misunderstood but David Golding, Education Director for the Greenkeepers Training Committee, and Ken Richardson, Education Officer for BIGGA, will attempt, over the next few months, to take away some of the mystery which leads to so much confusion. This month they answer some of the most frequently asked questions.**

## **1. What are National/Scottish Vocational Qualifications?**

**David Golding:** National or Scottish Vocational Qualifications have been introduced by the Government to industries in order to improve the skills of the British workforce.

NVQs are for England, Wales and Northern Ireland and SVQs for Scotland. They are based on national standards of competence and can tell you exactly what someone is capable of in terms of skills, knowledge and ability.

Greenkeepers can achieve N/SVQs at their place of work and now even the mature greenkeeper with no formal qualifications but years of experience can get qualified.

## **2. How do greenkeepers get on a course?**

**Ken Richardson:** The easy answer is to say that they should apply to their local college but this is only part of the answer as not all greenkeepers need to attend a course of instruction in the traditional sense before gaining a vocational

qualification, ie. prove competence. There are three main routes to gaining vocational qualifications. These are:

a. **The College Route.** For greenkeepers entering the profession without any recognised greenkeeping qualifications, or as Modern Apprentices, the college route is still the best way to gain the knowledge and skills of greenkeeping. However, the best place to show competence, ie the ability to do the job, is at the place of work. These assessments will, eventually, all take place on the golf course.

b. **Modern Apprentices** Modern Apprentices will use the college route to gain knowledge and skills, with assessment taking place at their place of work. However funding for their training is guaranteed, through the Greenkeepers Training Committee, until they show competence at level 3 N/SVQ. More information is available on the Modern Apprenticeship from the GTC

c. **Prior Learning Route** Greenkeepers who have been in the industry for some time, without gaining a qualification, or who hold an out dated qualification, can gain vocational qualifications by proving to an assessor that they are competent to do their job. Using this route means that greenkeepers could gain a formal greenkeeping qualification without attending a college course. However, others may need some top-up training, to reach the required standard. Many of the GTC Approved Colleges are now starting to offer this option.

## **3. Do all greenkeepers need NVQs?**

**Ken:** No, currently, they don't. However, I feel that the greenkeeping profession can move forward and improve its status only when all greenkeepers have or are working towards a vocational qualification.

## **4. How will they benefit the greenkeeper and the golf club?**

**David:** Golf Clubs offering N/SVQs show a commitment to the employees and provide opportunities for both career and personal development, improving motivation and enhancing performance.

N/SVQs can help to ensure the workforce is well trained and has the up-to-date skills for improved performance.

The qualifications can also be used for recruitment as job descriptions can be designed by referring to the standards which list the skills and knowledge the person the club recruits will need.

While the N/SVQs do not specify any particular kind or training programme the GTC will ensure that colleges, STRI, BIGGA and other training providers link their training to the national standards

For the greenkeepers N/SVQs offer recognition for the skills they already possess and use in their day to day work. The qualifications are available no matter what age the candidate is, or at what stage they are in their career.

There are no entry requirements. They can

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help improve confidence and self-esteem. All GTC assessors are trained to accommodate any candidate with special assessment or training needs.

## 5. Do BIGGA courses and training aids meet the requirements of NVQs?

**Ken:** All BIGGA courses, books and training videos are linked to the GTC Training Manual and, therefore vocational qualifications. Any course of instruction can provide only the knowledge and principles of doing a job. Competence needs to be proved, to an assessor, before an award can be made

## 6. What is the cost to register and where can I register?

**David:** If the candidate is new to the profession it would be advisable to allow the person to attend a GTC approved college for the knowledge and principles of greenkeeping but also ensuring most of the assessments are carried out in the workplace. These candidates will register at the college and the fees for City & Guilds/Scotvec and the training will be all inclusive.

Alternatively you can now register through the GTC Headquarters at Aldwark Manor, York. On average the cost per level of N/SVQ is £70 but please contact the GTC for the charges as they vary between City & Guilds and Scotvec and from Level to Level.

## 7. Are there grants available to study NVQs?

**Ken:** Some concessions are available for people who are not in paid work and anyone paying their own fees can claim tax relief on the full amount paid. Modern Apprentices have their training paid for, by the GTC but for greenkeepers in work, it should be their employers, ie the golf club, who pay for any training and or assessment.

## 8. Who are the assessors?

**David:** The role of the assessor is to make sure the person doing the N/SVQ is competent and carrying out the task to the national standard. Who better then to assess greenkeeping skills than competent greenkeepers?

As with greenkeepers there are also national standards for assessing and all industry assessors have to be trained to achieve the necessary qualifications (D32/D33).

To date the GTC has funded and now are training Course Managers/Head Greenkeepers and in some cases, Deputies, to become assessors.

If you have a candidate on the N/SVQ scheme or wish to enrol candidates and you are to be their workplace assessor contact the GTC.

By the end of March '97 the GTC will have trained over 400 greenkeepers to be assessors.

## 9. Why did the previous City and Guilds system change?

**Ken:** The old City and Guilds qualifications were theory and examination based. Candidates were not assessed, doing the job. Very few workers, in Britain, were given the chance to attend college

and gain a qualification and the numbers of qualified workers in Britain was one of the lowest in Europe. Vocational qualifications were introduced in the hope of remedying this by encouraging all workers in all professions to work towards a formal qualification which would indicate what they could do and what they must know in order to do their job.

## 10. Do greenkeepers have to go to college at any stage?

**Ken:** Not all of them. As I have already said, for young greenkeepers just entering the profession, college is the best route, however, more experienced greenkeepers can gain a vocational qualification without ever attending college whereas others may need to attend top-up training at a college or other training centre. The latest directory of colleges including all GTC Approved Colleges appears on Pages 26-27 of *Greenkeeper International*.

● Next month a comprehensive list of N/SVQ Advisers and Assessors will be included and David and Ken will be looking in more detail at the new Modern Apprenticeship.

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